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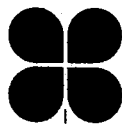
THE CLOTHES YOU MAKE—I

# **Help yourself to sew**



Agricultural Extension Service  
University of Minnesota

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## HELP YOURSELF TO SEW

This booklet goes with the unit The Clothes You Make—I:

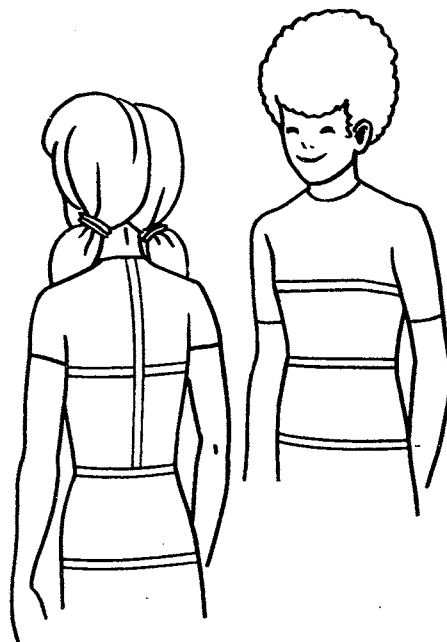
Topshirtjumperskirt    Night Clothes

Many Dresses    Pants Plus

You need get it only once. Use it again if you take one of the other four projects. Why not buy a folder to keep all your sewing helps together?

## CHOOSING A PATTERN

To choose your pattern size you will need to take measurements. Have someone help measure you.



Girls should measure:

**Bust** — around the fullest part.

**Waist** — at your natural waistline.

**Hip** — at 7 inches below your natural waistline or fullest part.

**Back waist length** — from your back neck bone to your natural waist.

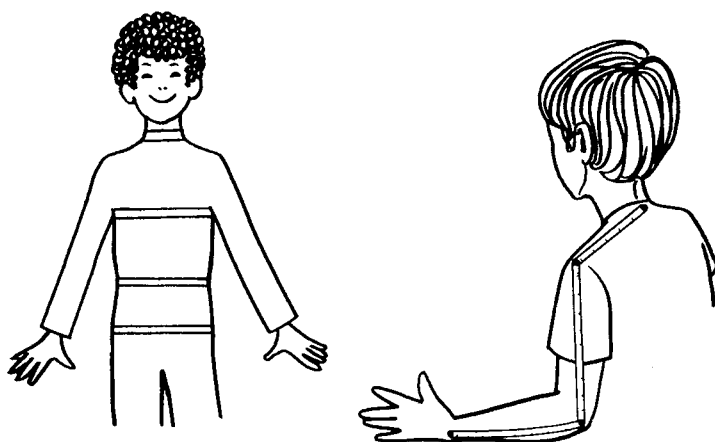
Check the pattern book to find your pattern type, and then find your size. If you are making a top, jumper, or dress, go by your bust measurement. If you are making a skirt or pants, choose the size that has the same hip measurement as you. However, the pattern will probably be sold by waist measurement.

Developed by Eileen G. Anderson, urban extension agent

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Fellows should measure:

**Chest** — around the fullest part.

**Waist** — at your natural waistline.

**Hip** — around the fullest part.

**Neck** — around the neck plus  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch for shirt neck size.

**Sleeve** — from your neck bone, along the shoulder, over bent elbow, down to the wrist.

Check the pattern book to find your pattern type, such as boys, teenboys, men, and then find your size. If you are making a shirt, go by the neck and sleeve measurement. If you are making pants, go by the waist measurement.

A pattern with fewer pieces and less detail will be the best choice if you are a beginner. Some patterns are especially easy for sewing.

As you grow and sew you will become aware of pattern designs and their effect on you. Did you know that clothes with long up-and-down lines will make you look slimmer? So will clothes of a deep, solid color. Separates of different colors and clothes with crosswise lines will make you look shorter and wider. You will have to decide which look you want. Try out different styles of clothing as you grow in the project.

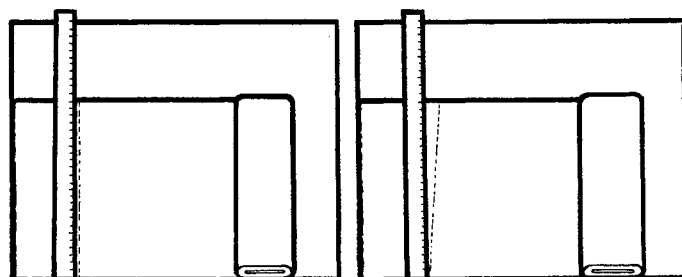
## CHOOSING FABRIC AND NOTIONS

Choosing the fabric for you pattern is fun, but you need to think about some other things. Try to picture in your mind the way it would look in the fabric you want to get. Look at, and feel the fabric. If you want a sharp crease in your pants, try creasing it with your fingers. A pattern with many

small pieces will not look good made up in a large print fabric.

Other things to do:

1. Check the grainline of the fabric. The lengthwise and crosswise yarns should be at right angles. To check this, lay a yardstick perpendicular to the fabric selvage. Find a yarn next to the straight edge, and with your eye follow it all the way across the fabric. If it stays straight with the edge it is on the grain. If it goes off at an angle, it is off grain, so don't buy it. If there is a design on knit fabric, follow it all the way across the fabric.



Buy this

Not this

2. Avoid plaids and napped fabric (corduroy, velveteen) if this is one of your first sewing projects.
3. Check your pattern envelope for the amount of fabric needed according to your size and fabric width.
4. Ask the clerk for a label that tells how to care for the fabric. Sew this into your finished garment.
5. Notions are things such as thread, zipper, buttons, elastic, etc. They are listed on the pattern envelope. However, it is usually not necessary to buy seam tape or stretch lace for your hem. Choose synthetic thread (for example, polyester) if you are sewing knit, permanent press, stretch, or synthetic fabrics. Cotton mercerized thread is best on cotton, linen, or rayon fabrics. For wool, choose silk or cotton unless it's a wool knit, then a synthetic is best.

There are new sewing notions out all the time, such as tapes, fusibles, marking equipment, gadgets. Just because it's new doesn't mean it is wise to use it. Before buying a new notion or piece of equipment ask yourself these questions:

- Do I sew enough to make the cost worthwhile?

- Do I have the sewing skill to use it?
- Will it help me sew a garment that looks good to me?
- Will it last through the wear and cleaning of the garment?

You might want to keep a record of any new notions you use and how you liked them.

Name and Brand of Notion	Where was it used and with what fabric?	Would you use it again? Why?

## SEWING TOOLS

Sewing tools are needed to do the job. Some you'll need right away, others you can collect as you need them. Maybe you can borrow some from your mother if she sews.

Sewing tools that you'll need are:

Measuring tape, 60 inches is best.

Pins, dressmaker are best.

Pincushion to keep your pins handy.

Shears for cutting the fabric. Be sure they are sharp.

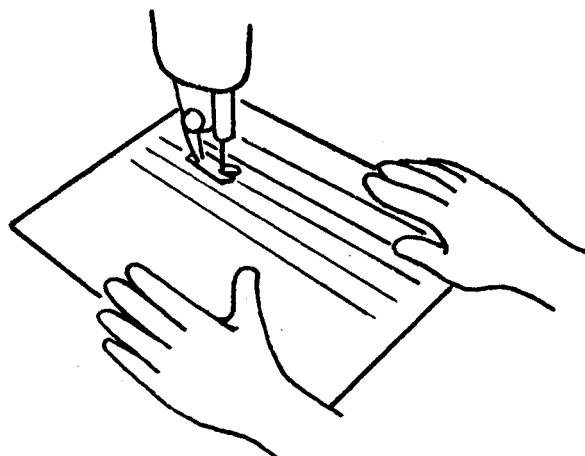
Needle.

As you get more sewing experience you will want to add a small scissor for clipping and cutting threads, needles in different sizes, a short transparent ruler, a thimble, and some equipment for marking such as tracing wheel and paper, or chalk. Try to have a container to keep all your tools in, such as a shoe box, coffee can, heavy plastic bag, or milk carton.

## SEWING ON THE MACHINE

Some things to practice . . .

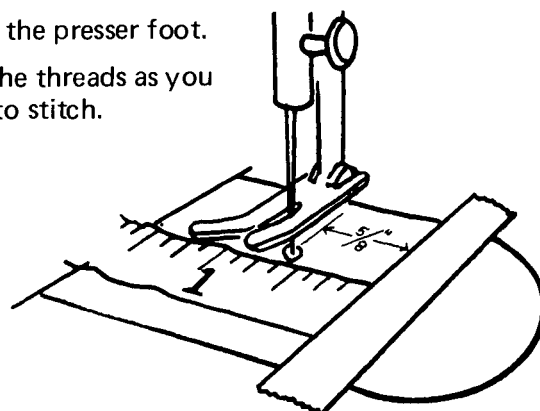
A good way to learn how the machine works is to run it without a needle and with the presser foot up. Try running it slow and fast. Try to stop and start smoothly.



Next put the needle in and practice stitching on paper with lines. Put the presser foot down on the paper. Guide it with both hands. Try to stitch right on the lines. Try turning corners and curved lines. Try to stitch right on the lines. Try turning corners and curved lines. Try stopping at the end of a line.

Now have someone show you how to thread the machine, or look at the book that came with the sewing machine. Also, learn how to wind and put in the bobbin. Use fabric scraps for practice stitching. Try to get in the habit of doing it this way:

1. Pull the two threads back and to the right.
2. Place the fabric under the presser foot.
3. Lower the needle into the fabric where you want to start stitching.
4. Lower the presser foot.
5. Hold the threads as you begin to stitch.



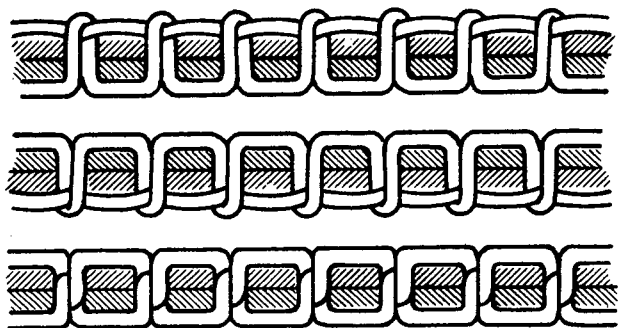
Practice threading and stitching on the machine.

If your machine does not have markings for seam allowances, place a strip of tape 5/8 inch from the needle hole on the right. This will be a guide for most of your seams.

Thread tension . . .

Both the needle and bobbin thread should have the same tension to make a balanced stitch.

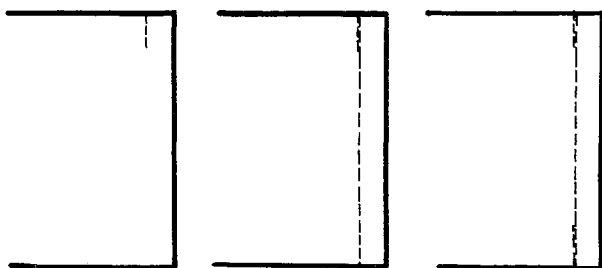
The stitching should look the same on both sides of the fabric. Have someone show you how the tension is regulated. Most fabrics today need a fairly loose but balanced tension as shown in the third example below.



#### Backstitching . . .

Backstitching is done at the beginning and end of each seam. It keeps the threads from pulling out and is quicker than tying knots.

To begin the seam, place the needle  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in from the edge of the fabric. Stitch backward to the edge, then forward to continue the seam to the end. To end the seam, stitch backward  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch. The stitches should be right on top of each other. Most machines will have a lever to set the stitching to go backwards.



#### Stitch Lengths . . .

Your machine will make stitches of different lengths if you change the stitch regulator. A smaller number on the stitch regulator means longer stitches or less per inch. A higher number will give shorter stitches or more per inch. Most of your stitching will be 10 to 12 stitches per inch. A basting stitch is 6 to 8 stitches per inch. Some machines are different and have numbers from 1 to 5. One means the shortest stitch and 5, the longest.

#### Special Stitches . . .

You may have a newer sewing machine that makes a variety of stitches and stitch patterns. Read your machine manual to know how and

where to use them. Some can be used in stitching knit fabrics or as seam finishes.

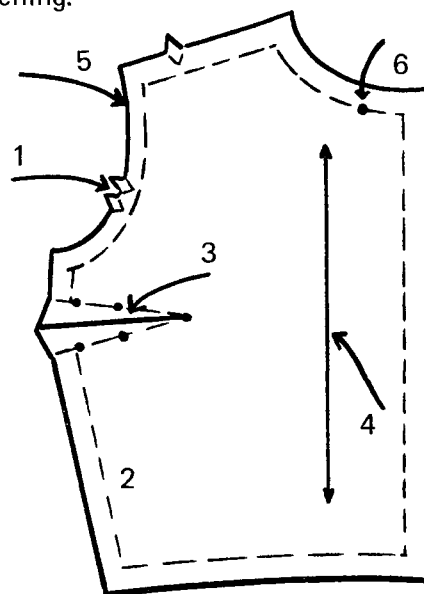
## SEWING WITH A PATTERN

Before getting to the pattern, pre-shrink your fabric. This means wash and dry it the same way you will be washing and drying the garment. Pre-shrink zippers and trims, too.

#### Pattern Markings . . .

Patterns have markings to help you put your garment together. Illustration numbers on this page correspond to the following markings:

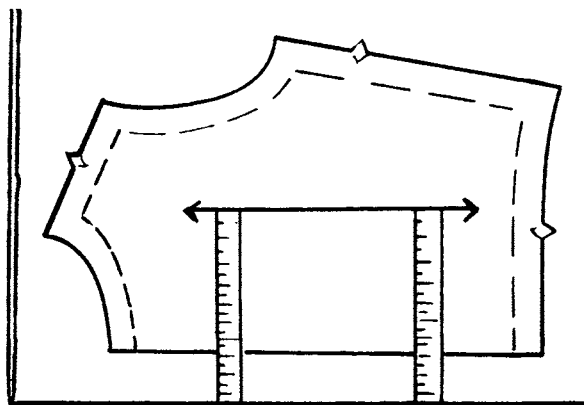
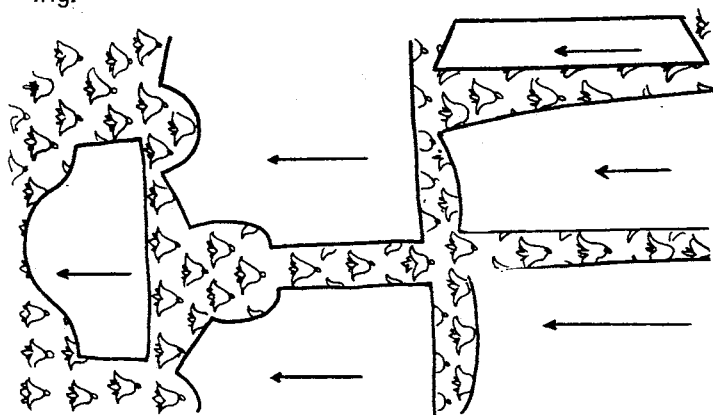
1. **Notches** are numbered to show the order in which seam lines are to be matched together.
2. **Stitching line** is  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch in from edge.
3. **Dart line** shows stitching lines to make a dart.
4. **Place on lengthwise grain** marking is a guide in placing pattern on straight fabric grain.
5. **Cutting line** shows where to cut out the pattern piece.
6. **Dot** shows where certain garment pieces are to be matched together; or the beginning or ending of an opening.



#### Cutting Out a Pattern . . .

Check the pattern guide for the cutting layout. You will need to find the layout for your pattern size, fabric width, and "with or without nap." Nap means the fabric has a raised surface that runs

in one direction so the tops of all pattern pieces must be placed the same way. Print fabrics with a one-way design need to be laid out this way, too. Fold the fabric the way the layout suggests, usually right sides together. Select only the pattern pieces you will need for the garment view you are making.



Lay the pattern pieces out the way the layout shows. Measure from each end of the lengthwise grain marking to the fold or selvage edge. If they are the same, pin the first 2 pins at end of arrows. Some pattern pieces must be placed on the fold of the fabric. Pin on all pieces before you cut. Check to make sure all the pieces are on correctly. Cut the notches outward.

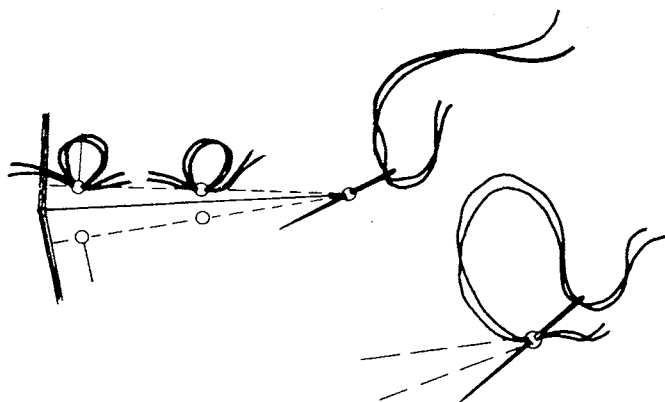
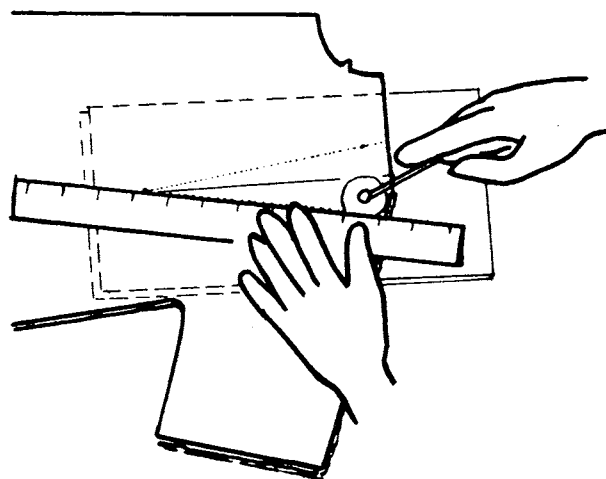
#### Marking . . .

The dart lines and dot markings must be transferred to the fabric. There are several ways to transfer markings. They should all be done on the wrong side of the fabric. Choose the one that is best for you.

1. **Pencil or chalk** can be used to transfer the dots on the dart lines and other markings. Put a pin through the marking and both layers of fabric. Carefully remove pattern. Mark the pin points with pencil or chalk on both sides, or draw lines connecting the pin points.

2. **Tracing wheel and paper.** Be sure to test mark this on a scrap of your fabric first. It may show through and be difficult to remove. Don't use a color that is much darker than your fabric color.

This way of marking gives you definite lines to follow. Place two pieces of carbon paper so they will mark on both wrong sides. Roll the tracing wheel over the dart lines once. Make an "x" to mark a dot.



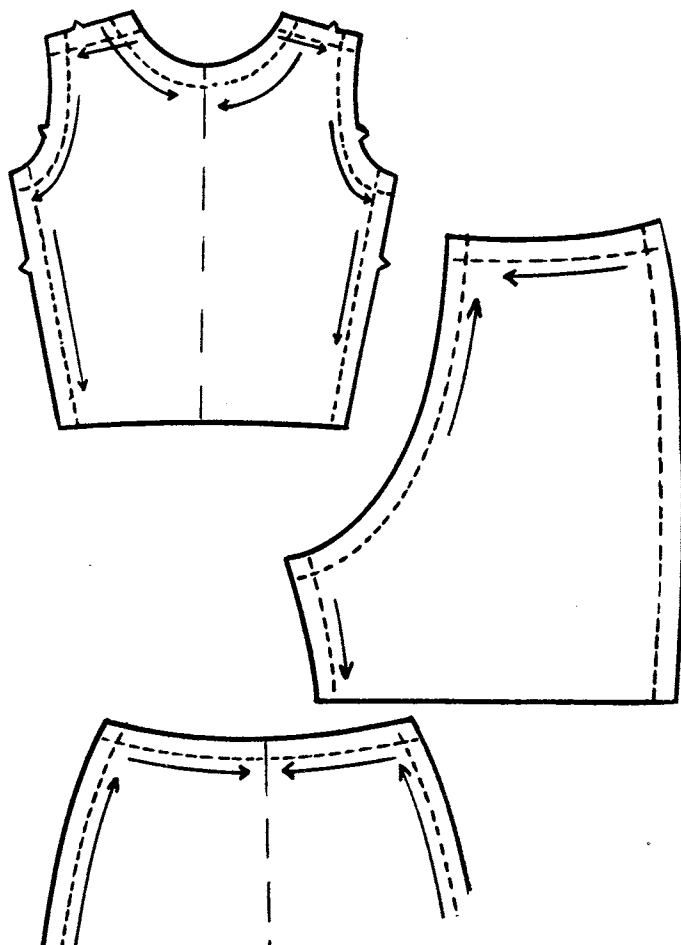
3. **Tailor's tacks** should be used on sheer, delicate, or thick fabrics. Use a double thread, with no knot. Take a small stitch on the marking through the two fabric thicknesses. Leave a 1 inch end. Take a second stitch leaving a 1 inch loop. Cut the threads leaving another 1 inch end. Remove the pattern. Carefully separate the two fabrics and cut each tailor's tack in half.

#### SEWING SKILLS

Pattern instruction guides will give different information. Here are some instructions that may not be found on your guide, but are important for a good looking garment.

## STAYSTITCHING

Staystitching is a line of stitching  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from the edge and through one layer of fabric. Do it on all curved and bias edges of loosely woven and knit fabrics. It keeps the fabric from stretching as you work on your garment. (Illustration shows direction of staystitching).



## DIRECTIONAL STITCHING

Stitch seams in the direction of the grain. Slide your fingers along the fabric edge. If it stays smooth, this is with the grain. If it gets rough it is against the grain.

## PRESSING

Pressing as you sew is important. Check the iron temperature, and whether moisture is needed, on a scrap of your fabric first.

Each dart must be pressed before it goes into a seam, and each seam must be pressed before it

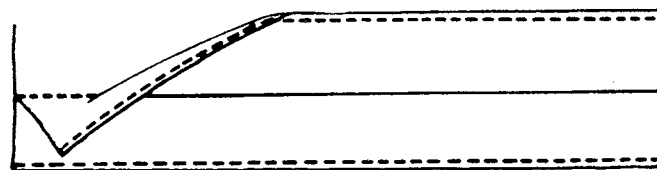
joins another seam. Darts are usually pressed down, or toward the center of the garment. Seams are usually pressed open and flat.

Pressing is lifting and lowering the iron - never push it back and forth.

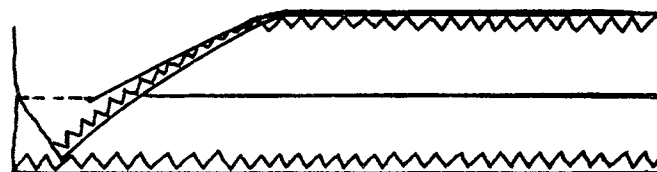
## SEAM FINISHES

A seam finish on a plain seam keeps it from raveling and weakening. Double knit and firmly woven fabrics do not ravel and need no seam finish. Most other fabrics can be finished by:

1. stitching  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch from the edge, or



2. a zig zag stitch close to the edge.



## CLEAN FINISH

A seam, an outer facing edge, or a hem might need to be clean finished. To do this (1) stitch  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch from the edge, (2) fold on the stitching line, and (3) stitch again close to the folded edge. If your fabric is thick and bulky, it can just be edge-stitched and pinked. Here again, knit fabrics need no edge finish.

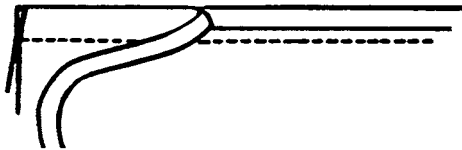
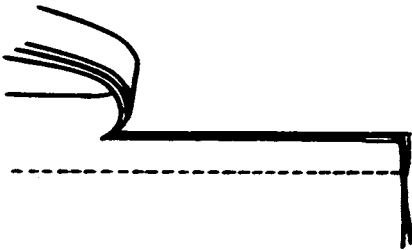




## TRIMMING, CLIPPING, AND GRADING

Some seams need to be trimmed and clipped to reduce bulk and to lay smooth and flat. Facings, collars, and cuffs are some of these places. Inside curves should be clipped to the stitching. Outside curves need small triangle-shaped pieces clipped out.

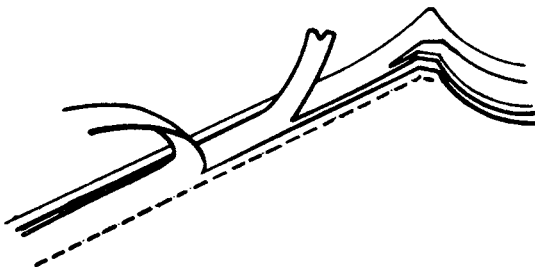
Facing seam allowances should be trimmed to 1/4 inch. On heavy fabrics where the seam allowances are turned the same direction, the seam should be graded or layered. This means each seam allowance is trimmed a different width - 1/4 inch and 1/8 inch. The seam nearer the outside of the garment should be the wider one.



Corners need to be trimmed diagonally. Interfacing corners should be trimmed off 1 inch before stitching.

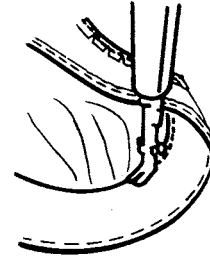


In a seam, interfacing should be trimmed as close to the stitching as possible.



## UNDERSTITCHING

Understitching will keep the facing from rolling to the outside and showing. It is a row of machine stitching placed close to the seam line on the right side of the facing. The facing and seam allowances are pulled away from the garment, and placed flat against the machine and stitched. Knits can be understitched with a zig zag stitch.



## INTERFACING

Interfacing is a layer of fabric placed between your garment and facing. It gives body and reinforcement to your garment. Interfacing is needed at necklines, collars, cuffs, pocket flaps, waistbands, belts, and always in buttonhole areas.

Two important things to remember when choosing interfacing fabric are (1) it should not be heavier than your garment fabric, and (2) it must have the same care properties as the garment fabric, for example "machine wash" or "dry clean only." Select your interfacing and garment fabric at the same time. Hold the two fabrics together over your hand to see if it is too crisp, too soft, or just right. The more you sew the easier it will be to choose the right interfacing fabric. The pattern envelope will tell how much interfacing to buy.

Interfacing fabrics are woven, non-woven, or iron-on. Woven fabrics have grainline and should be placed on the same grainline as the garment piece. Non-woven fabrics have no grainline and can only be used in straight grain areas where no roll is needed or in knit fabrics. Iron-on fabrics are applied to facings by the steam and heat of an iron. Make a trial sample first to be sure it isn't too heavy or hasn't changed the appearance of your garment fabric.

A garment fabric that is light to medium weight might be used for its own interfacing. If it's a print, be sure the print doesn't show through.